



Guidelines for Applicants to the University of Birmingham Fund for Universitas 21 (U21) Projects

Introduction

These guidelines have been created to help colleagues consider whether they wish to apply for funds to develop collaborative projects with our U21 partners and to assist in the application process. The seed fund provides development costs that will facilitate collaboration with one or more U21 partners. It is expected that a project would be financed and sustained from alternative sources following this initial tranche of money.

Projects might include, for example, collaboration on research and teaching through special interest and subject based groups or networks, entrepreneurial and commercial activities, policy development, structural and institutional development, and aspects of learning and teaching etc. In fact, most activities that can benefit from a critical mass in terms of cooperation with our U21 partners who possess appropriate expertise and interests.

For more details regarding the Universitas 21 network, a full list of U21 institutions and details of the University of Birmingham's activities go to:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/collaborate/universitas21.aspx>

Main aims of the award

Primary aims of the award are:

- To initiate or develop collaborative projects between individuals, Schools, Departments etc. across the U21 network and in the spirit of U21 cooperation.
- To initiate and develop projects that otherwise may not have had the opportunity.
- To set in place the structures and organisational systems of a project that will ensure sustainable development beyond the lifetime of the initial award.
- To help embed collaborative ventures and cooperation between Birmingham and interested parties across the U21 network.
- To facilitate, where appropriate, knowledge transfer, best practice, academic development etc, that will provide added value to the participating academic communities.
- To assist in strengthening the research and teaching profiles of the University, School or Department.
- To raise the profile of a School and their staff.
- To strengthen the global network of academics and other staff within U21.

Nature of the Award and Eligibility

Applicants should note that:

- The proposal, if in excess of £1500, will normally be expected to be 50% match-funded by the budget centre.
- Smaller awards (<£1500) from the Special Projects funds could be considered as a prelude to a subsequent and more substantial application that aims to develop the initial activity.
- Larger awards (>£1500) will be at the discretion of the U21 Advisory group and the final budget based upon the merit of the proposal and discussions with the interested parties.
- The local grant from Birmingham's funds may well serve as a prelude to an application for funding from the U21 network itself.
- The award is open to academic and non-academic staff (or teams) that are full time employees and have completed their probationary period.
- The award permits visits to any of the U 21 institutions and allows for multiple visits.
- The award cannot be used to visit UK U21 institutions exclusively, but visits can be included as part of a wider proposal.
- Applicants will be allowed only one application during the course of an academic year, however, they can reapply if unsuccessful.

- U21 project awards >£1500 would not normally be repeated beyond the initial award.
- Applicants must be able to demonstrate excellence and innovation in their field and indicate how this contributes to both the project and the University.
- The U21 project fund provides academic staff with the opportunity to develop collaborative activities that will advance and enhance their work, but it is *not* for personal research projects. Applications will be encouraged that demonstrate a strong emphasis on collaborative teaching and learning.
- Non-academic staff will be expected to outline a project that will investigate in detail an aspect of administrative, academic-related, or management practice that could include, for example, policy development, organisational change, systems and procedures, knowledge transfer, benchmarking and the identification and exchange of best practice. Applicants should indicate how their proposal is sustained over an extended period of time.
- Whilst there is no set time length for any visits included in the proposal, a general guide is that up to one month may be appropriate. Staff should factor this into their existing commitments on Campus.

Application Procedure

Applicants will be expected to offer the following information:

- Indicate the project's title together with a brief synopsis outlining the nature of the project.
- State the U21 partner institution(s) identified for collaboration and/or visits, and indicate a clear rationale showing how the appropriate institution(s) have been chosen to meet the objectives of the project.
- Identify at least one personal contact for each of the institutions agreeing to collaborate in the project, including contact details.
- Identify the primary reasons for initiating the project, define the activities intended, including visits, indicate the expected outcomes and aims, and express how these will be of value to the School and University.
- The support of their Supervisor, Head of School/Department, or School Manager.
- Applicants should give due consideration to the amount of time necessary to achieve tangible benefits from the project, but also the amount of time which they can reasonably dedicate or expect to be away from their normal duties. However, where no visit to a U21 institution is envisaged, the funding could be used to support other activities.¹

The application should clearly state:

- If the project will only run for the duration of the U21 funding.
- Explain briefly the context of the project's historical development if it existed prior to the application for U21 funding, or how circumstances led to the application.
- How the project will be embedded or continued beyond the lifetime of the U21 funding (projects that clearly show a strategy of sustainability beyond the lifecycle of U21 funding will be considered favourably).
- A timetable for the development of the project, for the period of the funding at least.
- A clear breakdown of project costs, including match funding; clearly indicating the total amount the application is requesting from the U21 project funds.

Line Managers will be expected to write a brief supporting statement outlining:

- What they perceive to be the expected benefits.
- The importance of any visit or collaboration to research, learning and teaching, or to the School/Department more generally.
- The appropriateness of the partnership arrangement.
- The capacity of colleagues responsible for the project to act in an ambassadorial role on behalf of the University.

The Offer of an Award

- The application will be considered by the U21 Advisory Group. Applicants will be notified of the decision within four working weeks of the deadline date.

¹ These might include video conferencing or hospitality for visiting staff from U21 institutions travelling to Birmingham. It is not normally intended that the project fund will finance conferences.

- Awards will be made based upon the merits of each application. There will be no interview or presentation. The Advisory Group is not obliged to enter into detailed discussions with applicants who are not awarded funds.

Successful applicants will be expected to:

- Write an end of year report outlining the project's progress, the major outcomes of the collaboration, and proposals for future activities.
- Disseminate how the experiences and outcomes of the project have benefited their School and the University (through presentations for example).
- Project staff will be expected to act as an ambassador on behalf of the University of Birmingham during their visits/activities. It is possible that they will be called upon to undertake additional duties as a representative of the University and in the spirit of U21 collaboration and cooperation (where appropriate).
- Book travel through the University's preferred travel provider.

The successful applicants will be informed of the following:

- The exact total of the award, excluding the contribution made by the School/Department.
- The time limit for awardees to complete their visits/activities within the constraints of the project funds.
- The deadline dates for reports.
- How the award will be paid.
- That any outstanding finances, if unspent, will return to the University.
- That staff must present receipts for all expenses to be reclaimed.

Upon receipt of the offer of an award, recipients will be expected to:

- Confirm acceptance of the award as soon as possible by notifying the U21 Project Officer.
- Notify their line manager and head of budget centre
- Notify their contacts in the U21 partner institutions as soon as possible.
- Keep the U21 Project Officer informed of travel commitments and the project's progress.
- Project staff are expected to be responsible for their own itinerary (including flights and accommodation for example). The International Office/U21 Project Officer will provide general advice on international travel and collaboration with our U21 partners.

Following your visit(s) or at the end of the funding period you will be expected to:

- Submit the report to the U21 Advisory Group.
- Be willing to give presentations to inform staff, where appropriate.
- Present receipts for all expenses to be reclaimed from your visit/collaboration
- Return any outstanding under spend to the University U21 fund.
- Be willing to allow details of your visit to be published in order to promote future projects.

If you have any queries or require further clarification please contact:

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Endnote

If you think your proposal is based upon a visit purely for personal development or knowledge transfer, rather than the development of a longer task-based project, you may wish to consider a Birmingham U21 "Staff Fellowship". See www.u21.bham.ac.uk/fellowships.htm for more details.